

African American Women and Heart Disease: Five Steps to Improve Your Heart Health

(NAPS)—Heart disease is the #1 killer of women in the United States. For African American women, the risk for heart disease is especially great. Heart disease is more prevalent among black women than white women—as are some of the factors that increase the risk of developing it, including high blood pressure, overweight and obesity, and diabetes.

A nationwide campaign—*The Heart Truth*—is underway to raise awareness that heart disease is the #1 killer of women. *The Heart Truth* features a Red Dress as the national symbol for women and heart disease awareness. This symbol links a woman's focus on her "outer self" to the need to also focus on her "inner self" and her heart. What's a Red Dress got to do with it? A simple Red Dress works as a visual red alert to get the message heard loud and clear: "Heart Disease Doesn't Care What You Wear—It's the #1 Killer of Women."

The good news is that Americans can lower their risk of heart disease by as much as 82 percent by simply leading a healthy lifestyle. *The Heart Truth* and the Office on Women's Health offer the following steps to better heart health:

1. **Don't smoke, and if you do, quit.** Women who smoke are two to six times more likely to suffer a heart attack than non-smoking women. Smoking also boosts the risk of stroke and cancer.
2. **Aim for a healthy weight.** It's important for a long, vigorous life. Overweight and obesity cause many preventable deaths.
3. **Get moving.** Make a commitment to be more physically active. Aim for 30 minutes of moderate-intensity activity on most, preferably all, days of the week.
4. **Eat for heart health.** Choose a diet low in saturated fat, trans fat, and cholesterol, and moderate in total fat.
5. **Know your numbers.** Ask your doctor to check your blood pressure, cholesterol (total, HDL, LDL, triglycerides), and blood glucose. Work with your doctor to improve any numbers that are not normal.

The Heart Truth campaign is sponsored by the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI), part of the National Institutes of Health of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. To learn more about women and heart disease and to order a Red Dress Pin, visit www.hearttruth.gov or call the NHLBI Health Information Center at 301-592-8573 (TTY: 240-629-3255).

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NOTE TO EDITORS: February is American Heart Month!

www.hearttruth.gov